



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 5 June 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
5 JUNE 1968

1. France

The back-to-work movement is proceeding slowly indeed. Among others, public transport, postal, and radio-television workers are still on strike, and the automobile, steel, and chemical industries are still shut down.

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2. South Vietnam

Thieu has turned down the Assembly's general mobilization bill and asked for some amendments to make it more palatable to the military. Among the "suggested" amendments are expansion of the draft age and elimination of veterans' exemptions.

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Thieu has threatened to promulgate his own mobilization decree if the defense committees of both houses do not accept the changes.

If Thieu carries out his threat, he will severely strain relations with the lower house, which drafted the present limited bill. Indeed, he may even alienate the upper house, which had been more willing to grant Thieu broad powers in the mobilization law.

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3. South Vietnam

General Khang, the commander of III Corps, recently unburdened himself of complaints about Thieu, Premier Huong, and democratic institutions in general in a talk with Ambassador Berger. Khang is close to Ky, and his discontent almost certainly reinforces the vice president's own unhappiness.

Ky himself was in a black mood when Berger and General Abrams called to express their regrets over Sunday's accident. In his despondency he even talked of resigning, but Berger doubts that he will convert his talk into action.

4. Israel-Jordan

Yesterday's heavy exchange of fire along the border seems to have been triggered by nervousness on both sides on the eve of the first anniversary of the outbreak of war. The exchange started with small-arms fire but escalated quickly, with the Israelis finally sending aircraft to bomb Jordanian positions. The shooting died down again at dusk. Both sides have complained to the Security Council.

Demonstrations commemorating the outbreak of the war are still scheduled in Jordan today.

5. Soviet Union

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6. Czechoslovakia

In a speech to 6,000 party activists on Monday, Dubcek attacked Novotny and the conservatives with unprecedented vehemence. While he admitted that some anti-Communists were trying to establish themselves politically, he indicated he was sure he could control them. He also made only a nominal effort to hide Czechoslovakia's disagreement with the Soviets on some points of Marxist dogma.

The speech was part of a country-wide campaign to sell the government's liberal "action program" and undermine the conservatives. His remarks have a self-confident ring, leaving the impression that he no longer expects the Soviets to line up behind the conservatives.

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The first Soviet contingents--small ones, according to the Czech press--have entered Czechoslovakia for this month's Warsaw Pact exercise.


7. Ecuador

The outcome in the presidential election in Ecuador was no surprise. The aging demagogue, Jose Maria Velasco, came out on top in the three-way contest, but he received only a little over a third of the total vote.

Velasco's opponents are likely to have a majority in the legislature, and it seems likely that they will try to find some way to remove him. As Velasco himself said after the election, "The only thing Ecuadoreans can ever unite upon is in opposition to whatever government is in power."

8. Suez Canal

It has been a year now since the Suez Canal was closed, and we think it will stay closed for quite some time. The economic impact of this closure has been noticeably smaller than it was in 1956. Supertankers, for instance, can now carry Middle Eastern oil around the Cape of Good Hope for not much more than it used to cost to use the canal.

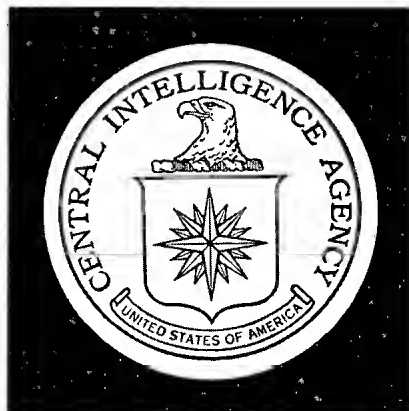


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The only countries which are really suffering are those in South Asia and the Far East. Freight rates between Western Europe and Communist China have gone up as much as 50 percent since the canal was closed. US grain shipments to India and Pakistan have been similarly affected.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

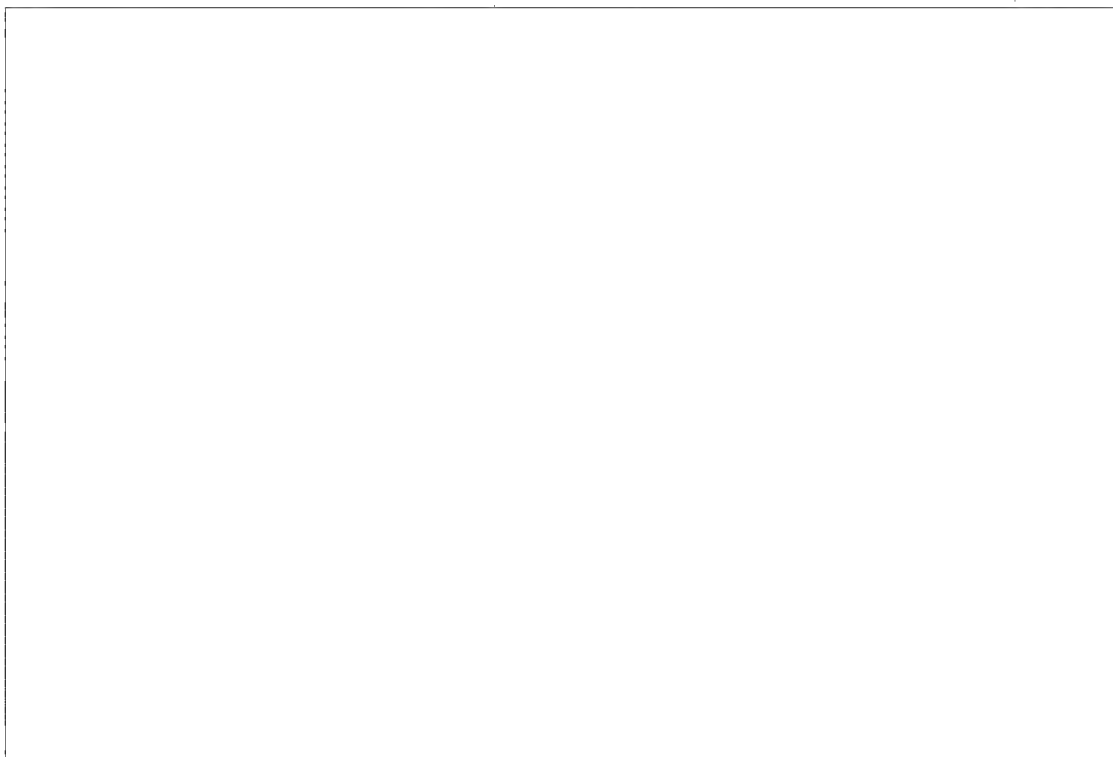
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Giap Talks Tough: Nothing particularly new or startling emerged from an interview with Vo Nguyen Giap published yesterday in the French Communist Party journal, Humanité. As North Vietnam's senior soldier, Giap takes a hard position for publication, and the Humanité interview was no exception. The General restated Hanoi's determination to keep fighting until its objectives are met. He remarked that the North Vietnamese question the good will of the US, stating the only peace that will be acceptable will be a peace with complete independence, free from "American interference."

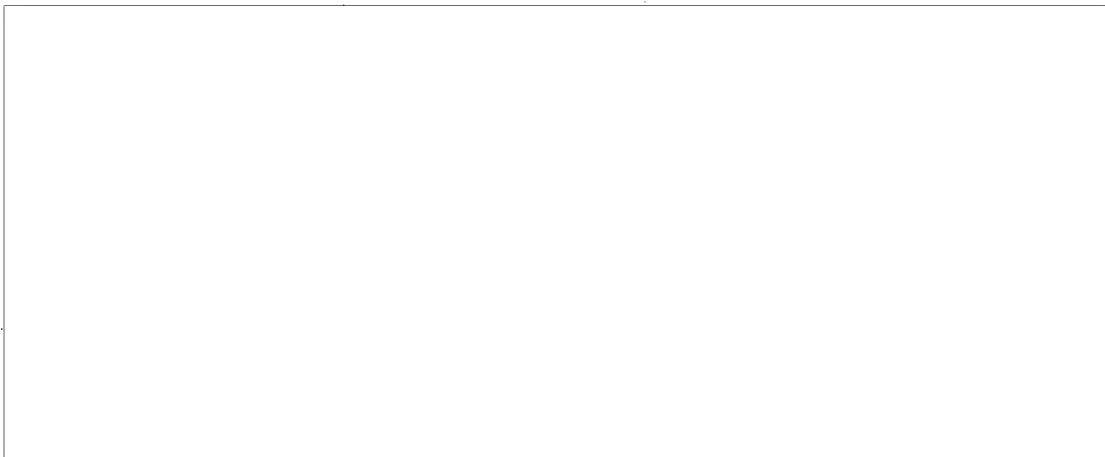
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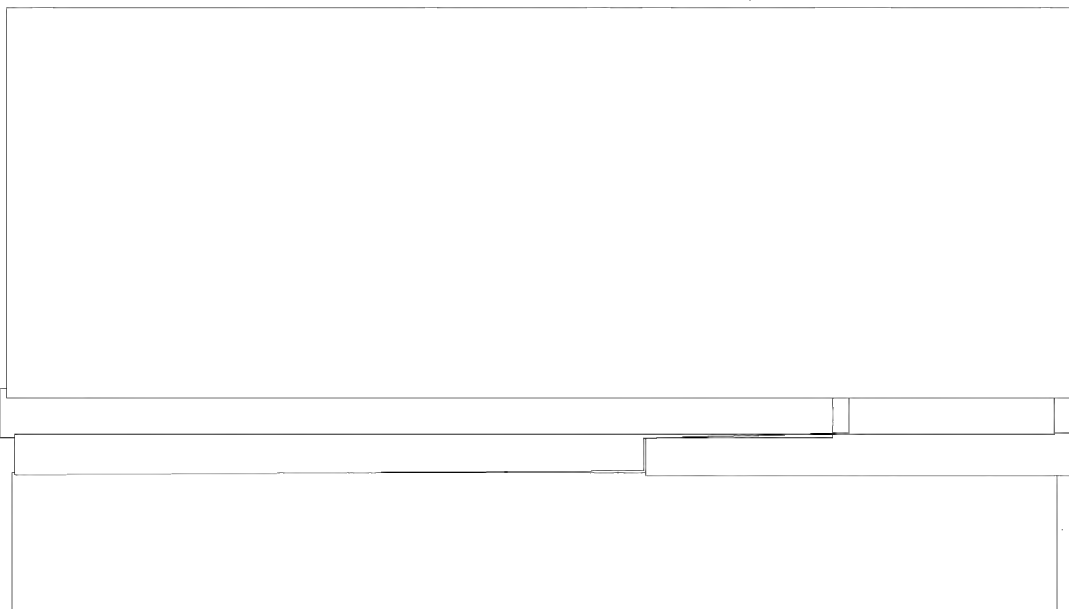
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Kennedy Letter: The Czech news service is publicizing what it claims are excerpts from a letter written by Robert Kennedy. As quoted by the Czechs, Kennedy stated the US "must unconditionally stop the war in Vietnam" and reach agreement with the Liberation Front as well as with Hanoi.

The Czechs claim the letter was in answer to some questions posed by a Czech newspaper and have told the US Embassy it was published in the paper Monday night. The embassy, however, has not been able to find the letter in print.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing significant to report today.

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